



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



DIVERS AND HAWKS HONOR VETERANS

Proud to be an American was projected loud and clear last Friday night as the Colman-Egan Hawks and the Lake Preston Divers took to the field.

First Premier Bank conducted a flag presentation in honor of community veterans. The red, white and blue 50 x 30 foot flag surpassed the school colors of black, blue and gold.

"The land of the free and home of the brave" echoed as players, coaches, veterans and soldiers from the 1742nd Transportation Unit unfolded the flag.

The Colman-Egan School District has a long and proud legacy of supporting and honoring South Dakota's veterans.

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Heroes Among Us—
showcasing 125 South Dakota
veterans.



SDNG FIELDING NEW MEDEVAC HELICOPTERS

The South Dakota Army National Guard is fielding new HH-60M Black Hawk helicopters at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Rapid City. The SDARNG has received its first two of six aircraft which will replace its current inventory of six UH-60 A/L model Black Hawk helicopters. The new aircraft will provide an increased operational capability to support state and federal missions.

The HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter, the U.S. Army's newest MEDEVAC (medical evacuation) helicopter, is designed to support the U.S. Army's vision of saving lives on the battlefield. The SDARNG is receiving the new helicopters as part of the U.S. Army's aircraft modernization program.

"It's great to have this aircraft because of its increased capabilities," said Maj. Jon Murphy, state army aviation officer. "We are replacing our older UH-60 A/L model aircraft with the new HH-60M model, and it brings a lot to South Dakota for state missions and emergency response."

Built on the attributes of its predecessor, the HH-60M incorporates advanced technological improvements that include: improved engines with increased power; an improved and more efficient rotor system, which increase lift by 800 pounds; nose-mounted thermal imaging for search and rescue; and an all digital avionics suite with a moving map, flight management system, glass cockpit with color displays, storm scope and radio systems.

Additionally, the advanced avionics suite allows for missions to be conducted in degraded weather conditions safely.

"The increased capabilities of the avionics package - with a fully coupled auto pilot - reduces the fatigue of the pilots flying the aircraft, allow us to safely fly in severe weather and provides increased situational awareness of what's around with the moving map displays," said Murphy.

The helicopters also feature a built-in medical interior, which includes an integrated litter system capable of handling up to six patients and an integrated oxygen generating system for onboard patient care.

The HH-60M's ability to mount an external fuel system adds an additional 400 gallons of fuel and increases its range by an additional hour and a half, allowing crews to respond to emergencies throughout the state without the concern of fuel stops.

While the Black Hawks are primarily used for troop medical evacuation, they can also be used to support aerial reconnaissance, search and rescue and wildland fire suppression missions.

"The newer airframe will also allow for decreased maintenance time and increase the overall availability of aircraft for state missions due to built-in improvements," said Murphy.

The aircraft fielding is expected to be completed by April. During this transition, the older UH-60 A/L aircraft will be turned in and fielded to other National Guard states.



HALLOWEEN AT MICHAEL J. FITZMAURICE STATE VETERANS HOME



As a child, we all enjoyed celebrating holidays with our family. Holidays were something to anticipate and enjoy, and Halloween was no exception.

The team at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home, never to be outdone, costumed out for this year's Halloween activities. Ghosts, witches, scarecrows and goblins appeared in hallways, closets, offices, and storerooms!!!!!!



DISTASIO GIVES RETIREMENT NOTICE

Steve DiStasio, director of the VABHHCS, announced this week that he will be retiring effective February 28, 2015.

42 years ago DiStasio stepped off the bus at Lackland Air Force Base and was greeted by Technical Sergeant Hendricks. DiStasio credits Hendricks for setting him on the right course for his service in the Air Force and with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

"We have enjoyed a great working relationship with Director DiStasio over the years and will continue to work with him and his team as they transition through this retirement," said SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman.



VABHHCS TO HOST VETERAN STAND DOWN

The VA Black Hills Health Care System (VABHHCS) will host a Veteran Stand Down on Wednesday, November 12, 2014. The event is open to all veterans and their families from 2:00 pm to 6:00 pm at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rushmore Hall D, in Rapid City.

The focus of the Stand Down is to reach out to veterans who are homeless or at-risk for homelessness. "Veterans will be able to access a broad range of specialized resources and services aimed at breaking the destructive cycle of homelessness", said Bill Fahrenbruck, Health Care Coordinator for Homeless Veterans, VA BHHCS, "This event is a great opportunity to connect veterans to the services and the benefits they've earned and deserve."

Several community partners, including the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and County/Tribal Veterans Service Officers, will have staff available to provide helpful information and on-the-spot services. Veterans can ask questions and receive immediate assistance on VA benefits, special programs, legal assistance, and health care enrollment. To help veterans prepare for winter, personal items such as cold weather clothing, sleeping bags, blankets, duffel bags, and hygiene kits will be available. VA BHHCS staff will provide preventive health screenings and flu shots. Veterans who have not previously enrolled with the VA are requested to bring a copy of their military discharge papers, DD 214, to the Stand Down.

SDDVA TO HOST MINI CONFERENCES

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be holding their annual Mini Training Conferences December 9-11. The conferences will be held from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm at the following locations:

- December 9 - Rapid City (Building 450 at Camp Rapid) – 2823 W. Main
- December 10 - Pierre (American Legion Post 8) 520 S. Pierre Street
- December 11 - Brookings (City County Building – West Suite 300) 520 3rd street South West

Training topics that will be covered are: admission procedures for the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home, review of updated forms, and pension (who needs to submit annual income and medical data).



HEROES AMONG US

For the past ten months, in connection with the state's 125th celebration of statehood, we have been honoring heroes among us — our goal is to feature 125 of them.

This week we honor a group of heroes that dedicate themselves to improving the lives of South Dakota's veterans. This elite group are the county and tribal veterans service officers and their assistants. They are dedicated to serving veterans, dependents and survivors.

Day-in and day-out, these heroes transform compassion into heroic action and they do it without any expectation of material gain. They make a dramatic impact and foster positive change for our veterans.

- These heroes serve as the first point of contact for veterans and advocate for them and their families for their benefits.
- They are the local source of information regarding veterans and survivors benefits.
- They are the resource for completing, filing, submitting and monitoring veterans' claims.
- They are the outreach coordinator.
- They are the link to state and federal agencies.

To them, we say "thank you." Thank you for your unending service and commitment to South Dakota's veterans. Thank you for your service to this great country.



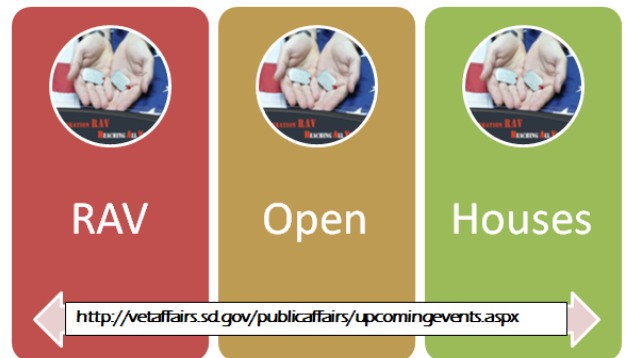
Upcoming Events

2014

Nov. 4—SDSU Veterans Combat Support Group—SDSU Student Union 065—6:00 pm
 Nov. 12—Veterans Stand Down—Hall D—Rushmore Plaza Civic Center—Rapid City—2:00-6:00 pm
 Nov. 14-16 Yellow Ribbon Post Deployment Event for the 1742nd Transportation Co.—Sioux Falls
 Nov. 20—Veterans Council Legislative Roundtable—Watertown—10:00 am
 Nov. 21—Veterans Council Legislative Roundtable—Sioux Falls—12:00 noon
 Nov. 22—Veterans Council Legislative Roundtable—Rapid City—10:00 am
 Dec. 2—SDSU Veterans Combat Support Group—SDSU Student Union 065—6:00 pm
 Dec. 2—Governor's Budget Address—Pierre—1:00 pm
 Dec. 9—SDDVA Mini Conference—Rapid City— Building 450—Camp Rapid (2823 W. Main)—10:00 am
 Dec. 10—SDDVA Mini Conference—Pierre Post 8 American Legion (520 S. Pierre Street)—10:00 am
 Dec. 11—SDDVA Mini Conference—Brookings City/County Building (520 3rd St—Suite 300) - 10:00 am

2015

Jan. 13—Governor's State of the State Address—Pierre—1:00 pm
 Jan. 29—SDDVA/Veterans Council Legislative Breakfast
 Feb. 2—VFW Legislative Reception—AmericInn—Fort Pierre
 Feb. 3—American Legion Legislative Reception—Post 8 Legion Cabin—Pierre
 Feb. 6-8—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Watertown



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